DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 070 RC 020 910

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TITLE An IBM Compatible Participant Data Base System for Outdoor Programs.
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 11p.; In: Proceedings of the 1992 and 1993 Conferences on Outdoor Recreation; see RC 020 906.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Computer Software; *Database Management Systems; Databases; Outdoor Education; Program Administration; Records Management
IDENTIFIERS *Mailing Lists; Outdoor Recreation

ABSTRACT

The process of maintaining mailing lists and other informational files on outdoor program participants is, plainly and simply, a pain in the neck. Mailing list maintenance is particularly difficult for programs that deal with university students, due to their frequent moves. This paper describes a new software program, the Outdoor Program Data Base System, which has been designed and developed specifically for use in outdoor recreation programs or programs serving persons with disabilities. The program is based upon the Dbase IV programming language and is available free to nonprofit organizations from the Idaho State University Outdoor Program. An IBM compatible computer with a hard drive is required to run the software. The software is used to maintain a participant database that includes names, addresses, student status, and outdoor interest areas. It can create files that can be used by a word processor to print mailing labels and hard-copy lists of the participants in the database. A list can be ordered by last name, interest area, or any other element. The main menu and its functions are described, and instructions are provided for starting the program and for making changes to the software, including changes to the main menu, list information, and master forms. Includes illustrations and ordering information. (SV)

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An IBM Compatible Participant Data Base System for Outdoor Programs

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Abstract—A variety of IBM compatible software programs are available on the market which can be used by non profit organizations to maintain data bases and mailing lists. Without programming knowledge, however, these programs do not address the specific needs of outdoor programs. This paper describes a new software program, the Outdoor Program Data Base System (OPDBS), which has been designed and developed specifically for use in outdoor recreation and/or disabled programs. As long as the software is used by non-profit schools and organizations, there is no fee for its use.

Introduction

The process of maintaining mailing lists and other informational files on outdoor program participants is, plainly and simply, a pain in the neck. Mailing list maintenance is particularly difficult for programs that deal with university students. Most students move at least once a year, if not more, and one is faced with the nightmare of constantly revising and re-revising the list.

The use of a computer and proper software, however, can take some of the pain out of mailing list maintenance. The software primarily used to maintain mailing lists and participant files comes from a genre known as data base software. For IBM compatibles, software with such names as Dbase, FoxPro, Paradox, RBase, or Dataperfect, are examples of data base software. Any of these or similar products can be used by outdoor programs, but it means considerable time learning about the product and then making necessary adaptations to fit the specific needs of a recreational program.

Fortunately, many data base products have a built in programming language which can be used

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to create programs that are considerably easier to use and address specific problems. This paper describes a software program, Outdoor Program Data Base System (OPDBS), which is based upon the Dbase IV programming language and which has been specifically designed for use by outdoor programs and/or organizations which serve people with disabilities.

The OPDBS software, developed at Idaho State University, addresses the specific needs of that program. However, with some minor changes that do not involve knowledge of programming, it can be adapted so that it more closely match needs of other programs. Part of the purpose of this paper to describe how the changes can be made. Too, the information on the software may be helpful for programs which desire to start from scratch and build an entirely new system.

Obtaining the Software

As long as the Outdoor Program Data Base System (OPDBS) software is used by university, military or other non-profit outdoor or disabled programs, there is no charge. To obtain a copy, send a formatted floppy disk and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: ISU Outdoor Program, Box 8118, ISU, Pocatello, ID 83209.

You will also need a copy of Dbase IV in order to run OPDBS. Dbase IV, unfortunately, is not free. If you are from a college program, you can obtain a "academic version" of Dbase IV at a considerable discount (under $200) from your university bookstore. Discounted copies are also available from mail order firms which advertise in such periodicals as *PC Magazine*.

Additionally, if you plan to make mailing labels, you will need a software program that allows you send label information to your printer. This shouldn't be a problem since most good word processing programs such as WordPerfect, Microsoft Word or WordStar have built in mailing label printing capabilities.

If for some reason you have a word processor which does not have mailing label capabilities, special label software programs are available. Label programs are available from software mail order firms listed in *PC Magazine*.

Hardware Needs

To run the software, you will need an IBM Compatible computer with a hard drive. The older IBM AT, PC/XT will work, but some processes are a bit slow. Newer computers with 486 or Pentium processors are ideal.

Four megabytes of space on the hard drive is necessary to install Dbase IV, though afterwards you can delete unneeded files to free up room. The OPDBS software files supplied by Idaho State occupy less than one megabyte.

Overview of the Software

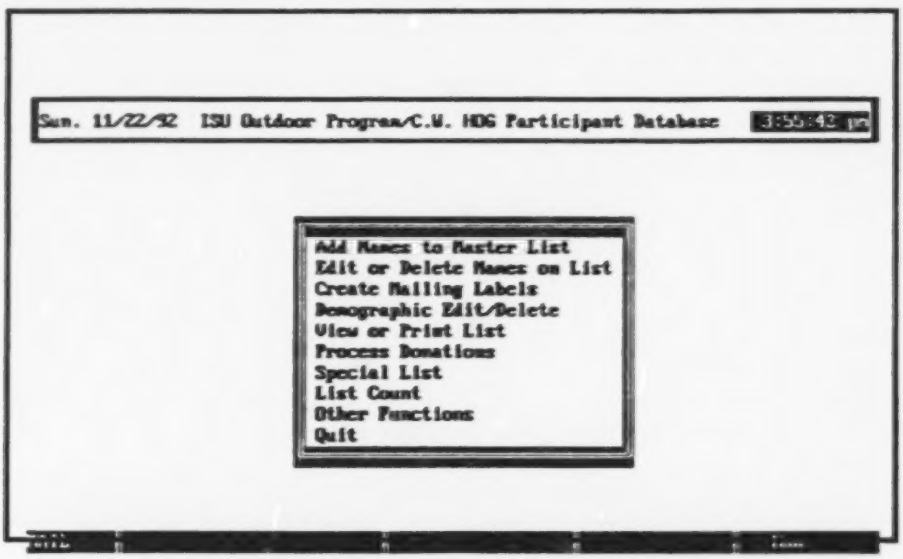
This software will allow you to maintain a participant data base which include names, addresses, student status and outdoor interest areas. It will create files which can be used by a word processor to produce hard copy lists of the participants in the data base.

The lists can be placed in any order: by last name, by student status, by interest areas, by date

entered, etc. It will also create files which can be used by a word processor to print mailing labels. Addresses in the data base can be changed and names deleted if necessary. If you conduct fund raising activities, the software is designed to record donations and provide you with a list of people who need thank you letters. It also produces a file which can be processed by post office software to add the four digit Zip Plus Four codes to each of the addresses.

Main Menu

When the program first starts the main menu appears:



The Main Menu serves as a starting point of the program. All of the major functions are accessed from here. You select the desired function by using the up or down arrow keys on the computer keyboard and pressing <ENTER> when the desired function is highlighted. You can also select a function by pressing its first letter. For example, pressing "C" will select "Create Mailing Labels."

Note that you can easily change the title on the Main Menu from "ISU Outdoor Program/C.W. HOG" to the name of your program. Instructions on how to make this change and others are found later in this paper.

The following is brief description of each function:

Add Names to Master List. This function causes a blank form to appear on the screen. On the form, you type in a participant's name, address and other information. A sample form is illustrated later in this paper, see "Changes to Forms." As in the Main Menu, you can alter parts of the form so it better serves your purposes.

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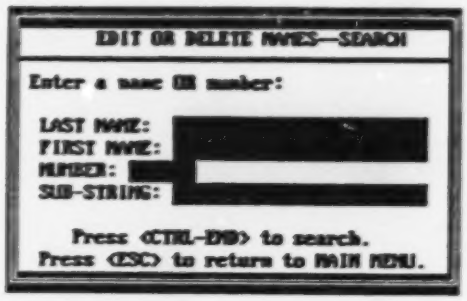
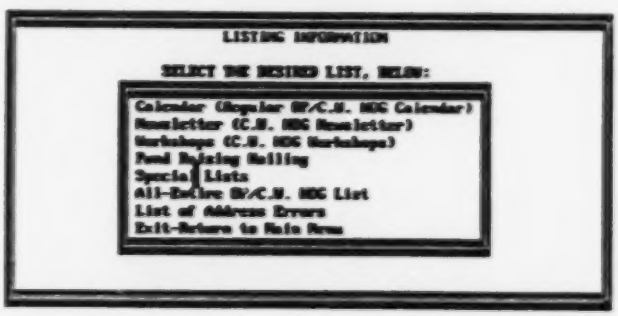
Edit or Delete Names on List. When you select this function, the "Search" dialog box shown below appears.



You can enter a person's name, a number which has been assigned to them, or a sub-string. A sub-string is a part of a name or address. For example, if you are looking for Walter Rothchild, entering "child" will find it. This is particularly helpful if you are searching for a misspelled name. Once the person has been found, then his or her form will appear. (A form is pictured on later in this paper, see "Changes to Forms.") On the form you can make changes, or if desired, delete them from the master list.

Create Mailing Labels. When you first select this function, the "List Information" dialog box appears from which you can choose the type of mailing list you want created. (The list shown in the illustration, below, can be changed to reflect your needs.)



Once the type of list is selected, a file is created by OPDBS which can be used by your word processor to make mailing labelsнor to create mail merge letters.

Demographic Edit/Delete. When you choose this function, the same dialog box ("List Information") appears as illustrated above. Once you select a topic from the dialog box, only those individuals on the list will be available for editing. This is particularly convenient if you are paging through forms. You can move forward through an alphabetical listing of the forms by pressing the "Page Up" key on your keyboard, or backwards by pressing "Page Down." This function provides a way of making the large master list smaller and more manageable.

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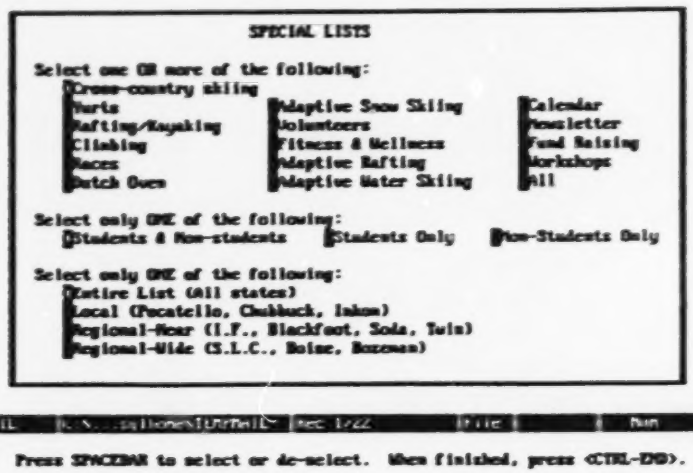
View or Print List. When you activate this function, the "List Information" dialog box appears. It is the same dialog box that appears as with "Create Mailing Labels" or "Demographic Edit" (see previous page). In "View or Print List," as well as the "Create Mailing Labels" and "Demographic Edit" function, you also have the option of selecting "Special Lists." This brings up the "Special Lists" dialog box, that can be used to further refine the desired list:



Press SPACEBAR to select or de-select. When finished, press <CTRL-END>.

Once you have selected the type of list desired, a columnar list of participants will appear on the screen. The list can also be sent to a file which can be used by your word processor to print out a hard copy. (Note that any or all the above interests areas can be changed so that they better conform to the activities offered by your program.)

Process Donations. This function brings up another menu which allows you to enter information on people who donate to your program. It will also create lists of people who need to be thanked for their contribution, and if you send out a program newsletter, it will provide a list of the names of contributors which should be recognized.

Special List. A Special List is a secondary data base which allows you to keep additional information on a some or all of your participants. This additional information can include phone numbers, comments on past participation, information on volunteer activities, etc. A Special List form is illustrated later in this paper.

Other Functions. This allows you to create a file which can be taken to a US Post Office and processed so that Zip Codes can be updated to include the Plus Four codes. It will also make address corrections and warn you if any addresses are incorrect.

Starting the Program

To begin, you first need to install Dbase IV on your computer's hard disk. Dbase IV comes with several disks, extensive documentation and instructions on how to install it. Once it is installed, copy the OPDBS program files from the floppy disk that you have obtained from Idaho State into the Dbase directory on the hard drive. For instance, if you are copying files from the "A:" floppy drive to

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the hard drive (usually "C:"), you would enter type in the following:

Copy A:*.* C:\Dbase.

This copies all the files from the "A:" drive to the Dbase directory on the hard disk.

Once Dbase is installed and you have copied the files, you can start OPDBS. Make sure that you are in the Dbase directory by entering:

CD\Dbase.

Then type in the words:

Dbase /t Mail.

This will start the program. (Note that the "/t" is a trick to avoid viewing the Dbase copyright screen. After seeing it a dozen or more times, it becomes a real bore.)

Making Changes to the Software

The OPDBS program is composed of a series of program files. Each of the program files can be identified by a .PRG extension. For example, when OPDBS starts, the Main Menu comes up. The Main Menu is found in MAIL.PRG. If you want to make any changes to the Main Menu, they need to be made in MAIL.PRG.

Let's look at how you would make a change in the Main Menu. One feature that you'll want to change is the title of the main menu. When you first obtain the program, the main menu's title is "ISU Outdoor Program / C.W. HOG Mailing List." That can be easily changed to your program's name.

To do so, first start up your word processor and load MAIL.PRG. (You can also use the editor built into Dbase. It is reached from the Dbase dot prompt—see Dbase manual for information on the dot prompt. At the dot prompt, type in MODIFY COMMAND MAIL.PRG).

When you have MAIL.PRG on the screen, it won't make much sense since it is written in the Dbase programming language. Don't worry about it. You don't have to know how the Dbase language works in order to make basic alterations in the program. Sometime in the future, if you wish to make major changes or add new features, you (or a computer aficionado involved in your program) may wish to dabble with the Dbase language.

The nice thing about OPDBS is that it provides you with a start. You can use it as a template, keeping the features you like about it and adding new ones without re-inventing the wheel. For this paper, however, we'll just stick to the changes you can easily make without learning the language.

With MAIL.PRG loaded in your word processor, look for the following line:

lc_heading = "ISU Outdoor Program / C.W. HOG Mailing List" && Menu heading string

If your word processor counts lines, it is line 59.

Once you have located it, delete the following: "ISU Outdoor Program / C.W. HOG Mailing List" and type in the name of your program. Be sure that you include the opening and closing quotes. For the instance, after changes the new line may look like the following:

lc_heading = "University of Iowa Mailing List" && Menu heading string.

After the change is made, save MAIL.PRG. If you are using a word processor, be sure to save it as "text" or "ASCII." Dbase can only work with text or ASCII files.

Now start up the OPDBS program and you'll see the new title on the Main Menu.

More Changes

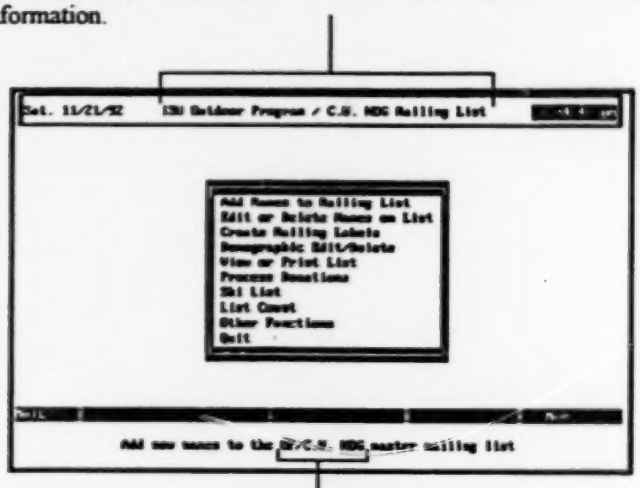
The various screens which appear in OPDBS are illustrated on the next few pages. Each illustration is accompanied by information on how to customize the program for your own purposes. As illustrated, some alterations require that you make changes in more than one program file. For instance, if you change any of the names of the outdoor interest areas on the participant entry form, you'll need to change the names in three different program files. That's because interest areas are used in a number of processes within the OPDBS software. Interest areas are used in mailing label list preparation, preparing lists, and doing a demographic edit. The charts show what item can be changed and a list of all the program files that must be changed.

An easy way to make these changes is to use the "Search and Replace" feature of your word processor. Let's do an example. Say for instance, you wish to change "Yurts" in the interest area section of the form to "Canoeing." According to the information, you will need to change "Yurts" in three program files: MAILFRM1.PRG, MAILFRM2.PRG and LISTWIN.PRG. Load the first program file listed, MAILFRM1.PRG, in your word processor. Use the Search and Replace feature of your word processor, search for the word "Yurts" and replace it with "Canoeing."

Make sure you continue the search and look for any other occurrences of "Yurts." There will be just one replacement in MAILFRM1, but for other changes you may have more than one replacement. Save the file. Now load in MAILFRM2.PRG. Use the Search and Replace feature to find all occurrences of the word "Yurts" and replace them with "Canoeing." Save the file. Load the last program file, LISTWIN.PRG and repeat the procedure.

Changes to Main Menu:

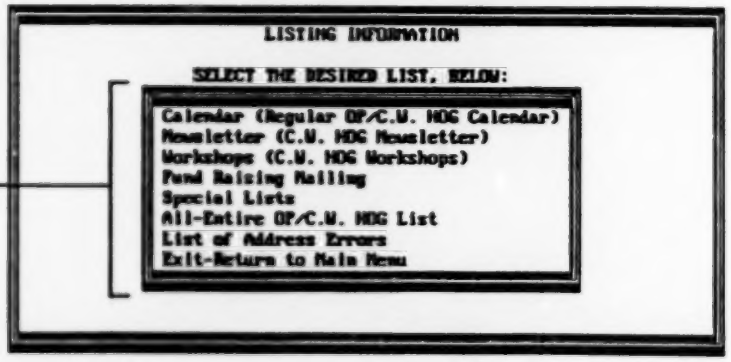
In the file, MAIL.PRG, search for "ISU Outdoor Program/C.W. HOG" and replace it with the name of your program. See "Making Changes to the Main Menu" for more information.



In the file, MAIL.PRG, search for OP/C.W. HOG and replace it with the name of your program.

Changes to Listing Information

To change any of the choices in the "Listing Information dialog box, search for the item you wish to change in the file (MAIL.PRG) and replace it with your change. The terms that you utilize should match the replacement made on the Master Form (next page). For example, if you change "HOG News" on the master form to "Volunteer List," then you should change "Newsletter" (the same as HOG News) on the Listing Information dialog box to "Volunteer List."



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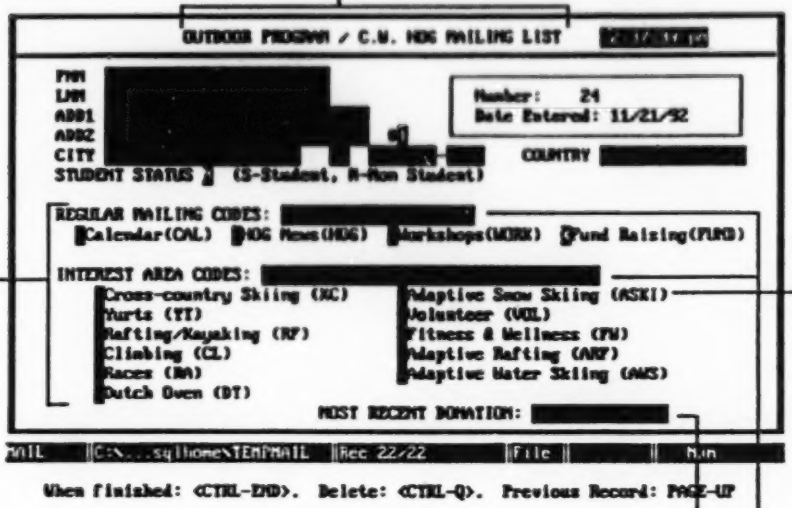
Changes to Master Forms

In the files, MAILFRM1.PRG and MAILFRM2.PRG, search for "OUTDOOR PROGRAM/C.W. HOG" and replace it with the name of your program.



Any or all of the Interest Areas or Regular Mailings can be replaced with items more appropriate to your program. In each of the files (MAILFRM1.PRG, MAILFRM2.PRG, LISTWIN.PRG) search for the word or words you wish to change, i.e. "Races (RA)," and replace it. Make sure that none of your replacements exceed 24 letters.

The donation blank may be deleted if desired. To delete it, search in the files (MAILFRM1.PRG and MAILFRM2.PRG) for "@20, 32 SAY "MOST RECENT DONATION: "" and "@20,55 GET Donated PICTURE "XXXXXXXXXXXXXX"" At the beginning of each line, type-in two ampersands: &&. (&& in the Dbase language means, "don't execute this line.")

Codes which appear in the "CODES" blanks may also be replaced. Search the files (MAILFRM1.PRG and MAILFRM2.PRG) for the code to be replaced. Search only for the code which is in all capitals, has a space after and is enclosed in quotes, i.e. "ASKI " Do not change codes in small letters (aski) or codes without quotes (ASKI).

Anyone with this blank checked will appear in the secondary data base (Special List Function in Main Menu). You may wish to replace this with an interest area such as "volunteers" or "trip initiators," etc. In this way you can keep additional information on a special list of program participants.

Note that making any above name changes to interest areas will also change the names on the "Listing Information" and "Special Lists" Dialog boxes.

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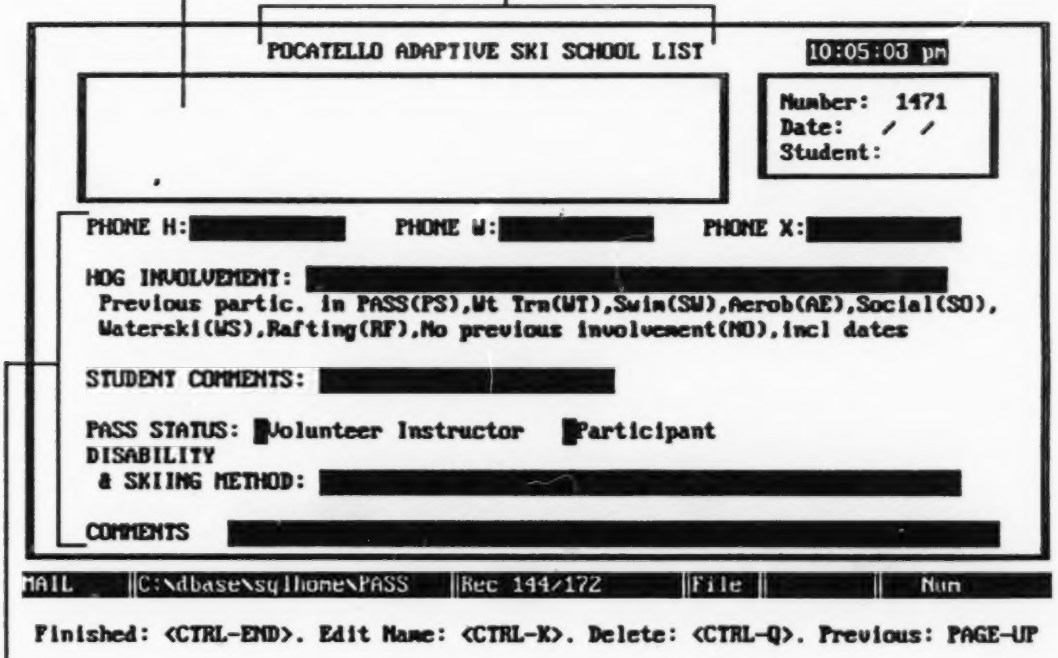
Changes to the "Special List" Form

The participant's name and address appears in this box. In order for any participant to appear on the "Special List" form, his or her name must be in the Master Database *and* the Adaptive Skiing blank on the form must be checked. (Note that Adaptive Skiing in the Master List form may be replaced with the name of another interest area.)

In the file (SKIFRM.PRG), search for "POCATELLO ADAPTIVE SKI SCHOOL LIST" and replace it with your new title.



To replace labels and textual material, search for the item in the file (SKIFORM.PRG) and replace it with the new label. For example, if you have decided to use Special List as a secondary data base of all the program's volunteers, you may wish to change "HOG INVOLVEMENT" to "VOLUNTEER STATUS." To do so, search for the word "HOG INVOLVEMENT" and replace it with "VOLUNTEER STATUS." You can also change the text which appears under HOG INVOLVEMENT in the same way. Search for "Previous Part. in PASS(PS)" and replace it with the new line of text. Replace the items above with labels and text which are about the same length as the original. You can move blanks around and restructure the form if desired, but it does required Dbase programming knowledge.

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